

VZCZCXYZ0002
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLP #1403 1421850
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 221850Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3650
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 6798
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 4135
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 8025
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 5271
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2509
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 2644
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 3482
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4628
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5139
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 9736
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0333
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 001403

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/20/2017

TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BL](#)

SUBJECT: FENCOMIN CONSIDERING FORMING OWN POLITICAL PARTY

Classified By: Ambassador Philip S. Goldberg for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) At the request of the National Federation of Cooperative Miners of Bolivia (FENCOMIN), Emboffs met with FENCOMIN President Andres Villca Daza and Press Relations Coordinator Jose Antonio Condori on May 18. This is the first time in some time that FENCOMIN has approached the Embassy, and FENCOMIN told Emboffs that the federation is considering forming its own political party, having grown disillusioned with the policies of President Morales's Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party. Villca stated that FENCOMIN currently is not politically allied with any group, having broken with the MAS over recent proposed changes to the mining code which would have been prejudicial to FENCOMIN's independent miners. Villca anticipates that a FENCOMIN-backed political party would not have the power to elect a president, but would be able to elect at least one senator, which would allow their grievances to be heard on a national level.

¶2. (C) In the meeting, Villca commented that in the past FENCOMIN had supported MAS but that now the federation feels it has no say in the government it helped elect. He claimed that in the recent violence in Huanuni, the MAS "militarized" the conflict between FENCOMIN and salaried miners, leading to violence. Villca suggested that the MAS may be trying to eliminate the cooperatives completely. The cooperativist miners have, in fact, recently been the cause of a very public retreat on the part of MAS and President Morales (over a question of increased mine taxes), and it is not hard to imagine that MAS might wish for the disappearance of a difficult former ally.

¶3. (C) Comment: A public break from MAS on the part of FENCOMIN could be both a symbolic and practical blow to President Morales. Further rupture between FENCOMIN and MAS could hurt President Morales, since his popularity is based in part on the backing of the disenfranchised sectors of society. The independent miner in Bolivia is to some extent a symbol of national pride, and the idea that this prototypical Bolivian no longer supports the populist president could cause difficulties for Morales. More practically, FENCOMIN members are estimated to number between 45,000 and 60,000, and if FENCOMIN family-members also

support the new FENCOMIN-backed party, the MAS could lose a significant block of votes. Additionally, FENCOMIN members have in the past figured prominently in street protests backing the MAS: the loss of a large number of dynamite-tossing supporters could weaken the MAS's street presence. End Comment.
GOLDBERG